

Obama Says ‘I Didn’t Have Scandals.’ So What Are All These?

Democrats and media revisionists try to make eight years of abuse disappear.

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At a Las Vegas tech conference last week, former president Barack Obama told an audience that his presidency had been scandal-free. “I didn’t have scandals, which seems like it shouldn’t be something you brag about,” Obama joked, [according to *Newsweek*](#). We hear this talking point quite often from Democrats.

By [David Harsanyi](#)
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Now, perhaps the president didn’t experience the fallout from a scandal, which is very different from never having been involved in one. For this confusion, Obama can thank the political media.

Why does it matter now? For one thing, historical revisionism shouldn’t go unchallenged. Democrats are running to retake power, and many of them were participants or accomplices in numerous corrosive scandals that have been airbrushed.

The other reason, of course, is that when we start to juxtapose the mythically idyllic Obama presidency with the tumultuous reign of Trump, we’re reminded that many journalists largely abdicated their responsibilities for eight years — which has a lot to do with the situation we find ourselves in today.

It’s not about Obama’s brazen lying about Obamacare or even recurrent [abuse of power](#). I’m talking about supposed non-scandals like “[Operation Fast and Furious](#),” a program devised by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) that put around 2,000 weapons into the hands of narco-traffickers (and an Islamic terrorist), leading to the murder of hundreds of Mexicans and at least one American, border agent Brian Terry.

The body count could have been higher when a homegrown extremist who, with another assailant, attempted to murder the audience at a “Draw Muhammad” contest in Garland, Texas with one of the Fast and Furious weapons. An off-duty police officer killed [both of the attackers](#).

Despite the incompetence, absurdity, recklessness, and fatalities of the program, the entire affair never really received scandal-like attention. No one lost his job. There will almost certainly be a tweet from Trump this week that political media will afford more attention than a story in which an American border agent was murdered with the gun

Obama's ATF provided.

Not even when the administration refused to cooperate with congressional investigators was it handled like a scandal. Not even when a federal judge **rejected** Obama's assertion of executive privilege in efforts to deny Congress files relating to the gun-walking operation was it treated as a scandal. Not even when we learned that Obama attorney general Eric Holder **misled** Congress about when he was made aware of the program did it rise to the importance of a Trump tweet. Holder **became the first sitting attorney general in American history** to be held in contempt of Congress — a vote that included 17 Democrats — and Obama still never paid a political price.

As it was, the Obama administration persistently ignored courts and oversight, breaking norms because it was allowed to do so. The president was articulate, friendly, and progressive. He might have executed an American citizen **without a trial** (not a scandal!), but his contempt for the process could be forgiven.

It's why Obama could secretly send planes filled with cash **to pay a ransom to a terror state** (using money earmarked for terror victims) and most reporters and analysts would regurgitate the justification they heard in the echo chamber. One *Politico* reporter might drop a **14,000-word** heavily sourced investigative piece (two officials involved in the program went on the record) detailing how the Obama administration undermined law enforcement efforts to shut down an international drug-trafficking ring run by the terror group Hezbollah operating in the United States, and most major news organizations never even mentioned the piece.

When they did, it was usually to give space to former Obama officials to **smear the reporter**.

It needn't be said, but if the names were changed to Trump and Russia, the president would be accused of sedition.

But by any conceivable journalistic standard, it's a scandal that should have triggered widespread coverage. So when we see mass indignation over every single hyperbolic statement from the current president, it's a bit difficult to buy the outrage.

An Obama official famously **bragged** to *The New York Times Magazine* that he could rely on the ignorance, inexperience, and partisan dispositions of reporters to convey administration talking points to help push through preferred policy. Rather than being hurt or embarrassed by this kind of accusation of unprofessionalism, many reporters are more reliant on the same people than ever before.

Yet many professionals who supposedly deplore the authoritarian nature of an administration that doesn't answer CNN's questions were generally quiet when Obama spied on reporters. The Obama DOJ spied on the Associated Press **in an attempt to crack down on internal leaks**. The DOJ tapped around 20 different phone lines—including cell phone and home lines—that snared at least 100 staffers who worked for the outlet. The Justice Department spied on Fox News reporter James Rosen in 2010, collecting his telephone records, looking at his personal emails and tracking his movements.

Color me skeptical, but somehow I doubt similar Trump efforts would be framed as a "**rare peek into a Justice Department leak probe**," as if we were pulling the curtains back on a fashion show. It would be, rightly, depicted as an assault on democracy.

Then again, spying was also never really given the scandal treatment during the Obama years. As Obama's CIA director, John Brennan became aware of an operation of **illegal spying** of a legislative branch staffer over torture files and misled the media about it. Did the president know? Shrug. The story hardly made a dent. Likewise, Obama's director of national intelligence, James Clapper, admitted **he misled** Congress about spying on American citizens. No scandal.

Today both these people are on TV chumming around with serious journalists who allow them to continue to make reckless, unsubstantiated political statements all the time. It isn't Chuck Todd on "Meet the Press" who asks Clapper tough questions, it's **Meghan McCain** on "The View."

There was unprecedented politicization of the government under Obama — most of it, I imagine, excused for being part of a good cause. The **NLRB**. The **Justice Department**. The IRS. The Office of Special Counsel, which reviews whistleblower allegations, **found** that IRS employees urged callers to vote for Obama, wore pro-Obama swag, and campaigned for Democrats in conversations with taxpayers — all of it illegal.

But far more seriously, IRS leadership, specifically Lois Lerner, aggressively targeted conservative groups before elections. The IRS **admitted** as much in an apology letter. Lerner was held in contempt by Congress for refusing to comply with investigators' demands. She never answered questions for this genuine attack on democracy.

What difference does it make, right? While the extent of the incompetence and negligence during the Benghazi terror attack on September 11, 2012 is still unknown, what we do know is that Obama and a number of high-ranking officials in his administration lied about what happened for **partisan reasons**. Susan Rice went on a number of national television shows and **claimed** that Benghazi was a "spontaneous reaction" to "hateful and offensive video," even when she knew it was a sophisticated and pre-planned terror attack. (Rice **is now** on the Netflix board, and Obama is a **very rich man**. At some point you've made enough money, **but that time is not yet**.)

Although they knew it was a complex terror attack, Obama and Hillary Clinton **cut television ads** to placate radicals in Islamic nations by repeating the claim that a video perpetuated the attack, and apologizing for American free speech — a scandal in itself.

Worse, however, the administration detained the man who produced the offensively amateurish "Innocence of Muslims," and initially charged him with lying about his role **in the production of the video**. This was a blatant attack on free expression. Yet most of the mainstream press continued to take the administration's word for it and report that the video was the cause of the **"protests."**

Democrats in general just kept pretending that every accusation was merely a partisan, racist plot to undermine the president. Whether it was **bypassing** process and oversight to fund cronyistic green projects that enriched political and ideological allies with tax dollars, or the Secret Service's

embarrassing **debauchery** or Hillary Clinton's attempts to circumvent transparency or, perhaps the most immoral, **the Veterans Affairs' negligence regarding veterans**, they would never admit they faced a scandal.

This double standard in coverage makes today's often sanctimonious reactions to Trump a bit difficult to take. Many reporters will snarkily point out that most of the stories critics latch onto have been reported on or broken by mainstream journalists. It's true. There are plenty of good journalists out there. But it's the intensity of the coverage and the framing of the events that is evidence of ideologically motivated coverage. And every time Obama or his allies claim that they were scandal-free, millions of Americans are reminded of the obsequiousness of most media coverage.